

One minute guide

Contextual Safeguarding

October 2019

What is contextual safeguarding?

Traditionally, our understanding of safeguarding children has been in relation to risk within the family, but as young people grow they spend increased amounts of time away from their family and with others.

Therefore, contextual safeguarding means:

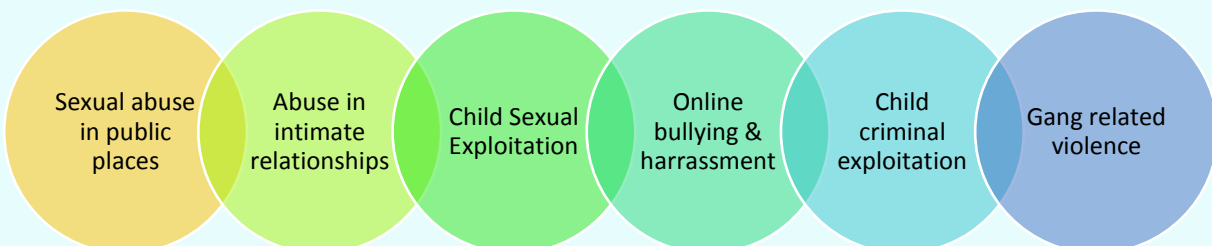
- Understanding how and why children and young people might be at risk of harm **outside** the home
- Thinking about risk in the context of schools, neighbourhoods and friendship groups
- Understanding the nature of those risks and having an appropriate safeguarding response

Contexts to consider →



Don't forget online and social media contexts!

The types of harm linked to contextual safeguarding could be:



What do we know?

The research done into contextual safeguarding holds some important messages for those working with children and young people:

- Abuse outside the family can impact negatively on family relationships
- Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts
- Other people/organisations DO have influence in different contexts – they are the right people to intervene

When young people are exposed to safeguarding issues outside of the family it can negatively impact on their inter-familial relationships meaning fewer opportunities to safeguard them. Conversely, if young people are exposed to harm at home it can negatively affect their behaviour in other contexts, putting them at higher risk.

Our understanding of how to safeguard children needs to change and expand!

What does this mean?

Traditionally, approaches to risk management to young people have been to either relocate them to a safe environment or to support them in navigating their unsafe environment. Understanding contextual risk means thinking about the circumstances the child is exposed to which means harm can occur, and how this can be disrupted.

It's a move from attributing risk solely to parents, to understanding that parents may have no influence in events outside the home.

It's a move from language implying that a young person is complicit or responsible for what has happened to them.

It's considering young peoples' social rules and attitudes to risk, plus an understanding of how neglect & adverse childhood experiences can contribute to a young person's vulnerability.

Please use your usual referral process or speak to your Safeguarding Lead if unsure

Key Contacts and Further Information:

Visit the Contextual safeguarding Network website - <https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership website - <http://www.coventry.gov.uk/cscp>

Language guidance for professionals -

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/5656/cse_appropriate_language_guidance_for_professionals